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ABSTRACT

The aging of the population of the United Kingdom has occurred at the same time as the greatest increase in unemployment since the 1930s. The older unemployed are likely to have longer periods without work than younger people. For many, loss of a job has meant enforced early retirement and a lower than anticipated income in later life. The U.K. does not have legislation similar to the prohibition of age discrimination in employment in the United States. The older unemployed are largely absent from education and training. Helping to meet the continuing education and training needs of adults offers colleges and others involved in adult education an important opportunity. There is a need to recognize the diversity of the older unemployed as well as questions of gender, race, and class. The institutions that seek to meet the educational needs of adults are diverse as well. People should be empowered to take part in and have control over their learning; the planning of education is, therefore, a two-way process. Five main objectives for education for the unemployed are employability, coping, context, leisure, and opportunity creation. Issues in planning educational programs include market research, recruitment, program content, program delivery, counseling and guidance for students, staff development, organizational policy issues, and evaluation. Case studies of City College and Sandown College in Liverpool and horticultural and business enterprise training in Northumberland are included, along with a 15-item bibliography. (CML)

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REPLAN is a programme to promote development of learning opportunities for unemployed adults by encouraging and supporting changes in education and training in England and Wales. It is funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, and supported by the Department of Employment: The Training Agency.

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FOREWORD

In Britain, we consistently undervalue our older citizens and continue to use increasingly dated stereotypes of them. All this, so obvious to any anthropologist from a different culture, has to us been long obscured. However, wider changes are now underway which are reflected in shifting attitudes and perceptions towards older people. This is largely due to the changing demographic profile of Britain, and indeed that of the industrialised world as a whole. One specific and highly important area where this change can be seen to be occurring is in employment, and it is to this area that this REPLAN report addresses itself.

It is important that educators should respond to the whole range of the changing educational needs of older people, be they broadly either cultural or vocational. In this report, David Parker highlights the need for vocational training and re-training of older people, and the imperative for educators to dispel the lingering cancer of negative ageist stereotyping amongst employers and older potential workers alike.

This REPLAN report also provides clear evidence in support of the view that society's investment in the learning of older people is as justified and as profitable to us as is its investment in the learning of younger people.

William Tyler
Principal, The City Lit

PREFACE

Since its inception in 1984, the objectives of the REPLAN programme have been to improve, increase and extend the educational opportunities available to unemployed adults. To this end, REPLAN encourages providers of education and training to review, adapt and change existing activity in order to meet changed community demand.

In so doing, it has sought to support the development of appropriate education and training for those groups most disadvantaged in the labour market by their lack of skills, qualifications or experience, or who simply have outdated employment skills or who suffer from various kinds of discrimination and prejudice.

The over-45s without employment are a large and identifiable group within the potential workforce who are – despite their maturity and the experience of a working life behind them – a frozen asset to the nation in both economic and social terms.

It has been part of REPLAN's strategy over a period of years to raise awareness in the education field of the need to respond to this client group, by means of redundancy counselling, curriculum development, support services, appropriate learning systems, access policy and personal guidance.

REPLAN's approach to this has always been through the needs of, and benefits to, individual unemployed people, though the longer term benefits of skilling and educating the whole population to a higher level are clear. Demographic change has given a more sharply economic perspective to continuing education and training for older people, whether employed or unemployed, and the changes in population structure will continue to exert pressure on employers, local authorities and colleges to see older people as equally important candidates for learning as apprentices and school leavers.

Under the 1988 Education Reform Act, local education authorities are required to undertake local research and consultation about community needs in preparing their strategic plans; demographic imperatives will clearly be important in influencing their thinking, and in bringing about changes in the composition of the further education market.

Many employers have thus far tried to meet skill and labour shortages by paying higher wages, or by recruiting ready-trained staff from elsewhere. This is clearly a very short-term strategy which cannot be sustained, and fails to tackle the fundamental problems. These can only be solved by a radical change in attitudes to employing and training older people; by a flexible approach to retirement age for key staff; and by a co-ordinated approach to education and training which involves employers, colleges, local authorities, community organisations and training agencies.

In the education arena, continuing education has always stood in the wings rather than centre stage. It has been the contention of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education for many years

that older people – whether employed or unemployed – have continuing educational needs, in personal, community and vocational terms, which are simply not being met within existing structures.

Continuing education can also be a powerful force in social and cultural developments – without which economic achievement alone is empty. Bringing older learners to the centre of the stage will in the long-term have more than purely economic benefits: it will be an impetus for a range of other creative developments. Both employers and the education service stand to gain from greater participation in learning by older people, and the benefit to individuals is incalculable:

The challenge now is to maximise our human resources by giving people the opportunity to build on and update their skills; to learn new ones; and to validate and accredit their relevant past experience. A co-ordinated strategy supported by all the partners involved can ensure that economic needs are met; that the unemployed get jobs; and that members of the workforce who are presently under-employed or underskilled have opportunities for progression within the labour market.

Older people have much to offer employers. The failure to draw on this pool of talent in recent years reflects the mismatch between, on the one hand, a wealth of experience, and on the other, a poverty of skills in relation to changes in technological and economic structures.

This report explores the changing relationship between the older worker and the labour market within the context of changing attitudes, employment patterns, joblessness and demographic change, and is the result both of research and practice. It is written for those involved in the planning of further and adult education, and to be used as a staff development resource at an awareness-raising level. It will be of particular interest also to tutors in further education for whom adult students represent uncharted territory.

Tony Uden
Head of Unit, NIACE REPLAN

THE GREYING OF BRITAIN

'Age is against you right from the start. As soon as you say you are over 50, that's it.' UNEMPLOYED FORMER WORKS MANAGER, aged 57, in Walsall

AGE

One in five people in the United Kingdom is aged over 60 – four times the proportion found in a smaller population 100 years ago. Not only are people living longer, but fewer children are being born. The age profile of society as a whole is changing in virtually every industrialised country. The greying of Britain presents one of the biggest social challenges of the 1990s and beyond.

The most obvious change is the rapidly increasing number of the 'very old', those living well into their eighties or even nineties, and the call they must inevitably make on the health and social services. But the consequences of an ageing population go much wider, with implications for employment, training and education, and the economy as a whole.

Two crucial facts will affect demography into the next century: life expectancy is increasing, and the number of children born in the last 30 years of the twentieth century will be far fewer than in the previous generation, from the end of the Second World War through the 1960s. Between 1985 and 1989, the number of 16–19-year-olds fell by 14 per cent (a total of 1.5 million school-leavers). In the next decade this rate of decline will continue: between 1985 and 2001 the number of 16–19-year-olds will fall by 21 per cent (2.5 million). Against this background, life expectancy is now age 71 for men and age 77 for women.

After infancy and school years and those of working life, there comes what some have called 'the third age', the culmination of a life's career, an age of personal achievement and fulfilment. Peter Laslett is one who sees this transition as a matter of choice. He says: 'A chosen point in the personal age of the individual rather than a point in his or her biological or social age is the occasion of the onset of the Third Age.' But, he adds, the extent to which this really is an age of opportunity and fulfilment depends in large measure on class, gender, race, income and other factors determining life chances.

EMPLOYMENT

One factor is employment: the ageing of the population has occurred at the same time as the greatest increase in unemployment since the 1930s. Shifts in the economy and industry have had a profound effect on the experience of older workers and their continued employability. Since 1945 the number of older people in the workforce has declined, slowly in the 1950s, but rapidly accelerating in the last 20 years. Between 1971 and 1985, the proportion of men aged

between 55 and 59 who were in work fell from 93 to 82 per cent. The corresponding figures for those aged 60 to 64 were 82 per cent and just over 50 per cent. In the 1980s, unemployment has hit 55-59-year-old men harder than any other group, the proportion out of work trebling. In 1987, 30 per cent of all unemployed men were aged over 55.

It is a national theme with marked variations, reflecting the buoyancy or otherwise of the economy regionally. For example, whereas 76 per cent of 55-59-year-old men in the South-east were in work in 1985, only 61 per cent were in Yorkshire and Humberside and Scotland and as few as 47 per cent were in Wales and the North-east. Among 60-64-year-olds the disparities were even more exaggerated: 56 per cent in work in the South-east against 26 per cent in Wales.

For many, the mid-50s are but a culmination of a longer experience. While life after 40 may bring new freedoms, in employment it doesn't so much 'begin' as tail off. In the United States this is recognised by the use of the age of 40 as the watershed criterion in legislation against employment discrimination.

In this country, public policy has also affected the older unemployed, but generally detrimentally. The older unemployed are likely to suffer longer periods without work than younger people. For many, loss of a job has meant enforced early retirement and a lower than anticipated income in later life. Three aspects of policy are particularly significant: those affecting redundancy, early retirement and job creation.

As industrial and technological change has influenced the nature and scale of industry, so redundancy has been used to regulate the supply of labour. After the Second World War, when labour was scarce and demand for workers acute, successive governments encouraged workers to stay in employment even after the time for 'official retirement'. The 1951 Budget, for example, proposed an increase in the retirement age and workers were urged 'not to retire and sink into premature old age'. By the 1960s, this situation had changed, and the Redundancy Payments Act 1965 sought to improve the flow of labour between industries. It compensated workers according to their length of service rather than by use of the hitherto more common 'last in, first out' formula. The effect has been to drive out older workers.

As unemployment began to rise to hit the 'one million mark' in the early 1970s, employers and trade unions alike began to promote early retirement schemes. They were seen as attractive both in meeting social and economic objectives. For many years, the unions had argued that early retirement was beneficial to the individual. For employers and government, early retirement offered a relatively uncontroversial means of reducing the workforce without compulsory redundancy. It was also a more flexible (and, therefore, ultimately more useful) device than natural wastage. Overall, expectations by the public and employers alike have been fostered that

retirement in the mid-fifties is not only acceptable but even desirable, in both personal and corporate terms.

Job creation schemes, like the Job Release Scheme introduced in 1977, have been introduced as a reaction against the rising tide of youth, rather than general, unemployment. The effect has been that older workers, who are perhaps the most vulnerable, have received proportionately least help in securing a route into work. The young are given skills which makes it all the harder for their parents' generation to compete. As a result job creation schemes sideline older workers, shunting them into an unemployment *cul-de-sac*.

How have the older generation fared as a result of these policies? Studies of early retirement have concluded that non-manual workers are more likely to take early retirement; they generally have good occupational pension schemes and better than average incomes. Two-thirds of male non-manual workers are in occupational schemes, compared to only one-half of male manual workers. By contrast, manual workers are more likely to have had to retire early as employers cut back on staff, leaving them on very low incomes. As Laczko and his fellow-researchers commented in an article in *The Journal of Social Policy*: 'Public policy for the early retired in Britain is primarily targeted towards the low paid worker, via the Job Release Scheme and the long term rate of Supplementary Benefit. Other older workers, particularly manual workers without occupational pensions, have, in effect, retired on sickness and Unemployment Benefit . . . and are likely to be in poverty.'

But it is not only in the loss of work that older people have experienced discrimination: it is widespread in the pursuit of work. There is considerable evidence that employment and recruitment practices operate to the disadvantage of older workers, as a glance through the 'wanted' advertisements of any newspaper will quickly testify. A survey reported in *Personnel Management* found that 30 per cent of job advertisements specified age, and, of these, 88 per cent set 40 as the top limit. In another survey, reported in the same magazine, two-thirds of jobs were overtly targeted at applicants in their thirties. (Advertisements reinforce this, even where age is unspecified, by the use of words which it is known that prospective applicants will equate with youth; words such as 'energetic', 'enthusiastic' and 'ambitious'.)

This would not be possible in the United States, where as long ago as 1967, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act prohibited the diminution of job and career prospects on the grounds of age. (The Act's main provisions are that it is unlawful for an employer to not employ, to sack or to reduce the employment conditions of a person in any way because of their age; to limit, segregate or classify workers in any way that would reduce their employment opportunities or adversely to affect their status because of their age; or to reduce the wages of any workers because of their age. Amendments in 1971 extended the age group protected from those aged between 40 and 64 to those aged between 40 and 69.) The enforcement

of this legislation, and the creation of a cultural climate against 'ageism' in the United States, has been assisted by the Grey Panther movement led by Maggie Kuhn. This now has over 100 networks throughout the country and carries out high profile, publicity conscious campaigns on issues relating to health, housing and pensions, among others.

Attitudes in the United Kingdom are much more ambivalent. They are more likely to accept conventional beliefs and tend to reflect existing practices and policy. Managers often wrongly believe the adage that 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks'; that older workers are inflexible and resistant to training. Older workers themselves, their companies and trade unions, argue that it's fairer to 'give youngsters the chance of a job'. (Shedding older workers also draws attention away from the need to create a working environment suitable for people as they get older: 30 per cent of manual workers, for example, die before they reach retirement age.)

The experience of older workers in searching for a job is generally depressing and frustrating. The vast majority feel that their age is against them, to the extent that some feel they have to lie about it. Discrimination, while more entrenched in recruitment for full-time employment, is nevertheless widespread for part-time jobs. As one 57-year-old former engineering works manager in Walsall was quoted in a recent survey: 'Age is against us right from the start. As soon as you say you're over 50, that's it. The last few months I actually got as far as two interviews, and they told me straight that I was too old. Experience counts for very little when you reach our age. It's youth at the helm, and that's how it goes'.

More generally, away from the specific area of employment, attitudes towards ageing and older people are a perverse mixture of caring and concern, on the one hand, and prejudice and fear, on the other. This is in spite of ample evidence that those 'beyond retirement age' not only have enormous potential for work, both paid or voluntary, but very often provide the time and energy that keep many community organisations alive.

The meagre level of pensions and Income Support tends to reinforce images of dependency, of 'concessions' (such as reduced travel fares), of taking rather than giving (or having given) to society. As Eric Midwinter commented in an article in *Policy Studies on Ageing*: 'Unlike children, the elderly play no future role in production. They will consume with no prospect of actually producing. That they have spent the bulk of their lives creating wealth is usually ignored'.

EDUCATION

Perhaps in part because they see work as something wholly or largely 'behind them', and in spite of being faced with plenty of 'free time', the older unemployed are conspicuous by their absence from education and training. Midwinter and the Centre for Policy on Ageing found, in the early 1980s, that only two per cent of people

over the age of 60 were involved in any formal education activity. Derek Portwood, researching in the Wolverhampton area, similarly found that older people saw education and training as irrelevant to their needs. (Department of Education and Science statistics show that only 0.8 per cent of men and 1.2 per cent of women aged 45-59 were enrolled in further education colleges in 1985, whilst the overall figure for the age group in polytechnics in the same year was 0.71 per cent.)

Why? Part of the answer, almost certainly, lies within the education and training system itself. As remarked earlier, training schemes aimed at job creation or vocational skills have, in the main, focused on the needs of the young. This is illustrated by the large amount of resources applied to the Youth Training Scheme and to the newer Employment Training programme, both of which target younger people. The 'first priority' in the latter is given to people aged between 18 and 24 and out of work for between six and 12 months; the next to 18-50 year-olds unemployed for more than two years. In that the scheme does not cater at all for the over-50s, Employment Training as presently constituted actually marks a slight reduction in training opportunities for the older unemployed. In 1987, the Community Programme, into which it was absorbed, counted 10 per cent of its participants as aged over 45 and three per cent as over 55.

There is, nonetheless, general evidence that the pendulum may be about to swing significantly towards older workers and students. Increasing awareness of what the Employment Secretary has called 'the demographic timebomb', the coming dearth of school-leavers, is one factor. The recognition of training and a highly skilled workforce as essential to long-term economic competitiveness is another. There is increasing talk, as in the 1950s, of people staying on at work longer, of more people - women in particular - re-entering employment, and of widening access to education. (It nevertheless remains a fact that the least tractable element in the recent improvement in employment is joblessness among the over-45s. Whereas, between January 1986 and October 1988, there was a 44 per cent drop in unemployment among 18-19-year-olds and one of 35 per cent among 25-34-year-olds, the corresponding figures for 45-55-year-olds was 27 per cent and that for 55-59-year-olds was only 19 per cent.)

In the education system in England and Wales, until recently, there existed a rigorous distinction in further education between provision based in colleges and meeting the vocational and training needs of young people, and adult education, sometimes based in colleges but often in free-standing centres and institutes, meeting the general and non-vocational needs of adults. The Education Reform Act 1988, however, does not maintain this distinction, applying the term 'further education' to both, and requiring local education authorities to 'secure the provision for their area of adequate facilities'. This includes the education of adults, part-time and 'non-vocational' education.

Stealing a march on the legislation, many colleges and local authorities have looked afresh at the educational needs of adults, including those who are unemployed or otherwise not in employment. They have been assisted in making significant shifts in practice and in catering for a broader range of students by the REPLAN programme of the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, an initiative which began its life in 1984. The programme has been the vehicle for a multiplicity of effective support mechanisms to educators in developing their work with unemployed adults. It provides, at the time of writing, consultancy and staff development support through the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), and curriculum development support through the Further Education Unit (FEU).

Nevertheless, the legacy of the landmark Education Act 1944 persists. If, as William Tyler, Principal of the City Lit, says, adult education is marginalised, then the education of older adults has been marginalised 'to the margins of the margin'. Structural ageism and discrimination on the basis of age flows from this and is often reflected in policies towards older part-time tutors, discrimination against older students wishing to join vocational courses, concessionary fee policies, and in the nature of the curriculum, 'a narrow diet of knitting, soft toy making, bridge and a little keep fit, making up the usual menu', as he describes it.

Older unemployed men, in particular, may have great difficulty in reconciling themselves to the traditional adult education curriculum. It has been argued, for example, that the establishment of compulsory state schooling for a specific age cohort has meant an association between youth and learning that effectively means that older people often believe that much of the provision is not for them. There is also a gender and class dimension. One survey, in London, found that older working class men, who had largely been in manual work, were uneasy about educational provision because they associated it with both youth and schools and with women and leisure.

It is important in this context to remember that educational provision was much less pervasive a generation ago than it has been since. Anyone now aged over 35 was able to leave compulsory schooling at 15 (rather than 16) and, in four cases in five, would have attended a secondary modern school for which leaving qualifications (the now deceased Certificate of Secondary Education) were only introduced in the mid-1960s. Anyone aged over 45 left full-time education before the boom in college and university places; the oldest of the polytechnics, for example, only opened its doors in 1969.

One result is that older people generally have been by-passed by the proliferation of qualifications, vocational and academic, of the last 20 years. Ironically, a recent trend is towards making certificates and diplomas competency-based. In part this is in reaction to the views of employers who have criticised qualifications as a poor

measure of what their holders can do, or even of what they know. Nevertheless, in placing such a premium on qualifications, employers too have helped to devalue experience.

If education is successfully to restate its case as relevant to older adults, whether employed or perhaps particularly if they are not, then it is going to have to change radically. Too often the attitudes of those involved in further (and 'adult') education, together with beliefs about the needs of older and unemployed adults and about the role and purpose of education, as with the formal system of educational activity itself, seem to conspire against older people.

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GOING FOR GOLD

'Tesco takes golden oldies off the shelf. Store drafts in the fabulous fifties.'

DAILY MAIL headline reporting that the supermarket chain plans a recruitment drive among the over-50s.

OPPORTUNITY

In describing older people, say, those clearly past their physical peak, it is instructive to note the popular imagery. Shades of 'grey' are frequently invoked, suggesting drabness, decline and decay. Those aged over 50 who lose their jobs, for example, are 'on the scrapheap'. But, as the headline quoted above and the title of the popular American TV series *The Golden Girls* both illustrate, different words can be used just as readily which suggest images of renewed vitality and maturity. Whereas 'grey' symbolises seniority, 'gold' denotes the wealth of experience: one points to the 'knowledge of the years', the other to 'learning through doing'.

In a fast-moving society, because of its position in the education system (and because of its relative wealth, historically), youth becomes promoted in significance. Very often the knowledge and experience of older workers becomes less rather than more valuable, compared with that of the newly trained. Looked at purely in terms of technical skills and know-how, this is increasingly bound to be true. It threatens, apparently, in all but the most traditional corners of society, such as the judiciary, to put the over-40s at a permanent disadvantage.

However, one of the most important trends within industry, business and society as a whole is away from machines and towards people. Whereas, once, people in large numbers served vast industrial and bureaucratic machines, today it is increasingly the other way around: machines are taken as a given; the added value in employment comes from maximising the potential of the workforce. This has put a new emphasis on personal attributes and judgement, and these cannot be learned as easily as technical skills. Slowly, but definitely, and pushed by demography, employers are realising that experience of work (and life) is a valuable commodity in itself. Those who, like Tesco, are deliberately going out to recruit more older workers, talk of 'reliability', 'loyalty', 'commitment' and other personal values. Experience counts for something after all, it seems. Past learning, on the other hand, is likely to be a diminishing asset, unless 'topped up' through continuing education and training.

Helping to meet the continuing education and training needs of adults offers colleges and those others involved in the provision of learning an important opportunity. With fewer 16-19-year-olds available for recruitment, they should be re-assessing their wider role in the community. Necessarily, this will mean expanding the work they do with adults, among which an important group are, and will continue to be, those who suffer or are threatened with

employment dislocation. This includes not only those who experience loss of work, but those who have to take a sustained break from it for a variety of reasons, including raising a family, and those who are susceptible to redundancy through reduced employability. Necessarily, again, very many of these adults will be aged 45 and over.

Since 1984, colleges, voluntary organisations and others who provide education have been helped to increase and improve the work they do with unemployed and unwaged adults by the REPLAN programme. Sponsored by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, it is managed through a team of regional officers by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education. Within the overall programme, areas of concern have focused on particular groups including women returners, members of ethnic minority communities, those living in rural areas, those who are physically disadvantaged – and the older unemployed.

Several key issues affect all these groups. One is the need to recognise diversity. There is, as with most groups, a tendency to stereotype the older unemployed and to treat them as 'all the same'. Yet, whereas someone aged 45–60 is of 'working age' and may look to education to provide a route into employment, people aged over 60 are unlikely to share such expectations. When we describe people as 'old', do we mean physically, mentally, in relation to pension entitlement, or to employment prospects, or to what or whom? Some draw a distinction between the 'young-old' and the 'old-old'. (As Victor Hugo says: 'Forty is the old age of youth; fifty is the youth of old age'.)

There are also questions of gender, race and class, and not only are the needs and interests of the older unemployed diverse so too are the institutions which seek to meet their educational needs. A large, multi-site, many department urban polytechnic will operate in a different way from a small, voluntary or self-help group in a location such as rural mid-Wales.

A recognition of this diversity leads directly to a second key issue, negotiation. The underlying principle here is that people should be empowered to take part in, and have control over, their learning: the planning of education is, therefore, a two-way process. Success depends on it.

In Chapter Four, *Responses in Two Areas*, the responsive styles of two projects which have attempted to meet the educational needs of the older unemployed are examined. They illustrate some common issues involved in planning educational opportunities in this area. First, however, it is worth examining some of the general objectives associated with educational work with the unemployed and how they might relate specifically to the needs of the older unemployed.

OBJECTIVES

In *Adult Unemployment and the Curriculum*, published for the REPLAN programme by the Further Education Unit, in 1985, Tony Watts and

Eddie Knasel seek to present a conceptual framework for the aims and content of educational provision for the unemployed. They put forward five main objectives for this provision to pursue:

Employability – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will increase their chances of finding and keeping a job.

Coping – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will help them to cope with being unemployed.

Context – to help unemployed people to understand the extent to which the responsibility for being unemployed lies with society rather than with the individual, and to explore possible forms of social, political and community action related to unemployment.

Leisure – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will help them to make good use of their increased 'leisure' time.

Opportunity creation – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to create their own livelihood.

A curriculum designed to increase the employability of older adults might include basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy; those skills involved in searching for work; and vocational or occupational skills associated with an old or prospective new job.

Successive studies have shown that the majority of the unemployed, when asked, considered that they were actively seeking work, although few, if any, had considered education or training as a route back into it. Research among the older unemployed draws the same conclusions: overwhelmingly, people want jobs.

However, this can present an acute problem for education providers: courses which focus on skills for increasing job prospects for older adults might be counter-productive and damaging to the individual, if their hopes are raised unrealistically. As a member of staff at Liverpool's Sandown College said: 'Tutors were in a dilemma about motivating students for employment at a time when employment possibilities in the city are declining.'

An additional and practical role for education is in helping people to cope with their unemployment situation. A curriculum designed to do this would include knowledge of welfare benefits, including pensions; budgeting; knowledge about community and consumer agencies; and the kind of domestic and craft-based education which can help to cut bills by home cooking, do-it-yourself, clothes-making, and so on.

This aspect of the curriculum is closely associated with that of leisure, and there are many examples of education activities designed

to help people cope with being unemployed through the development of recreational interests. For some people, education itself can provide a different lifestyle. It is not uncommon for unemployed adults to redefine themselves as 'students' (*'I'm not unemployed, I'm a student'*).

'Coping' and 'leisure' education are not necessarily neatly separable from 'vocational' education: gardening, carpentry, dressmaking, upholstery, car mechanics – all these can have multiple uses, in relation to coping, leisure, and possibly also to opportunity creation.

This is a yet further role for education, assisting the older unemployed to create opportunities outside traditional paid employment. Courses and learning activities can deal with self-employment, working in co-operatives, and opportunities in voluntary and community work, such as school governorship, community care, neighbourhood watch schemes and membership of community and civic organisations.

The Job Change Project in Birmingham, for example, provides counselling and support, including business advice for people interested in starting their own enterprise. The project acts as a mid-wife to community business and co-operatives. One of its successful offsprings is the 'C Team', a group of women who have organised themselves into a unit offering catering, cleaning, clerical and caring work services.

Similarly, The Third Age Working Alternative project in Swindon stresses self-confidence and self-help in a programme of education and training for the older unemployed, using a mixture of course work and work placements to help people into self-employment as an alternative to full- or part-time work.

The context in which tutors and organisers work is important in providing a framework for a curriculum directed towards the needs of the older unemployed. Adult and further education needs to explore the structural and economic issues associated with changes in the labour market. At the same time it must challenge the idea that unemployment is the fault of the individual, and the belief among older workers that 'my job is someone else's unemployment'. The idea that if older people hold on to their jobs, then the young will suffer is not borne out by the available evidence.

NEEDS

In planning educational activities, it is useful to consider the many and sometimes conflicting needs of the older unemployed in the context of Watts' and Knasel's objectives. Such needs, of course, will be experienced differentially within the 45-plus age-group, depending on, for example, race, gender, age, disability, commitments, ability, expertise and experience. They tend to become more individualised and complex, and therefore more difficult to satisfy, with age. What follows is a checklist, which is by no means exhaustive, of some of the commonest needs. (It was compiled by Tony Goddard, of Lancashire Polytechnic.)

Planning education for the older jobless: a checklist of learners' needs

- to get a job
- to acquire knowledge and new skills and competencies which improve employment prospects
- to develop job search skills
- to improve basic education, including literacy and numeracy
- to find out more about further education and training opportunities
- to gain access to vocational and educational guidance and counselling
- to learn about alternative areas of employment, including self-employment and voluntary community work
- to help adjust to unemployment through meeting others and learning how to manage financially and in other ways
- to understand more about unemployment, including the causes of one's own situation
- to make better use of one's time
- to develop new interests
- to re-assess one's position and gain renewed confidence
- to understand how psychological problems, including stress, can stem from unemployment
- to come to terms with one's position in the labour market, including the possibility of not getting another job
- to get more involved in the community
- to find a use for one's knowledge and skills
- to understand better the physical and mental aspects of ageing.

QUESTIONS ON OBJECTIVES

- What objectives underlie the educational opportunities your organisation is offering the older unemployed?
- What is the social context of your work? How do you deal with the issue of 'responsibility' for unemployment, and the idea of giving up a job to 'help' a young person? What is your notion of 'entitlement' in relation to older people?
- If the main focus of your work is employment skills, to what extent have you considered the availability of jobs in your area, possibilities of working with employers and organisations representing them, the psychological strain on those whose chances of re-employment are slim and the idea that blame might rest on those who are unsuccessful?
- If the focus is on coping and leisure, how do you deal with those who are only interested in training related to work?
- Have you considered the view that coping and leisure opportunities could be regarded as little more than socialising the unemployed into acceptance of premature retirement?
- How relevant might opportunity creation activities be within the context of the locality and a particular group of students?
- And, overall, how do you strike the right balance between supporting the ambitions of the older unemployed without generating unrealistic expectations?

ISSUES IN PLANNING

'Older adults can be attracted to colleges of further education and, having embarked on a suitable course of study, very few drop out.' SANDOWN COLLEGE, Liverpool

In looking beyond objectives, at particular issues associated with planning and providing educational activities for the older unemployed, there is, first, a group of what could be called market or student-centred issues. These include:

market research – the identification of needs: 'Who are the older unemployed, what do they want by way of education, and what are the conditions of the local labour market?'

recruitment – how to reach and involve the unemployed.

A second group contains what could be called product or activity-centred issues:

content – of what should activities provided consist, and how do these make use, in learning, of students' previous experience?

delivery – how should these activities be provided, and where and when?

A final group includes 'support issues':

counselling and guidance for students

staff development for tutors

organisational policy issues for managers
evaluation.

The grouping is not discrete: many issues impinge on various aspects in planning and providing educational activities. The question of fees, for example, is discussed below under 'organisational policy', although clearly it is important both in an assessment of the 'market' and in developing a suitable 'product'. The division adopted is one of convenience, essentially.

MARKET ISSUES

Market research and recruitment

The only thing the unemployed necessarily have in common is lack of a job. The content and approach of successful educational activities recognises diversity. But how can different needs be identified? Much of the evidence suggests a very low level of awareness of the range of opportunities within education – who it is for, and who provides it. Often, too, there are doubts among the unemployed about its relevance in improving job prospects.

An effective way of contacting and recruiting the unemployed and

of identifying their needs is by working with existing networks of organisations who support older people in the community.

Sandown College, in Liverpool, found this 'invaluable in combating the "invisibility" factor . . . (it) put older adult education on the agenda through the region'. Sandown's network involved a wide variety of organisations, including several other colleges, the city's library service and local authority planning department, a keep fit association and pre-retirement association, local 'Restart' programme organisers, the city's branch of Age Concern, a group of adult unemployed units as far away as Bury, Wigan and Deeside, a community centre, comprehensive school, Liverpool Polytechnic's Lifelong Learning Unit and Liverpool University's Extension Studies Department, which has an institute of human ageing. Also included was the Merseyside Task Force, set up under government aegis to regenerate the local economy.

Many of the organisations which the education provider may wish to involve in planning opportunities for the older unemployed and in linking their educational and training needs with community and economic development will already have links with each other. This should speed the way to collaboration, but the particular focus of education for the older unemployed is likely to be new. In any case, there are likely to be other organisations, not hitherto connected, which will need to be involved. In some cases, the provider will need to start from scratch. The creation of networks calls for the investment of a good deal of time and effort, but the benefits can extend into many areas of the provider's work, beyond that specifically concerned with the unemployed. Such benefits can be consolidated through the inclusion through formal representation of members of outside organisations on college (and other) management boards and planning committees.

Networking should be supplemented by inter-agency collaboration. Particularly important, is the development of links with the Department of Employment Training Agency, and, in future, with the Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), which will manage many of the Agency's programmes, including Employment Training. Links with local Job Centres are also valuable, as is regular liaison with economic development agencies such as local authority Economic Development Units, the Department of Trade and Industry, and inner city Task Forces. In terms of community development, collaboration will certainly need to involve a range of voluntary agencies, and perhaps Social Services too.

Guidance and counselling services, also, have a key role in helping to identify needs. Many local education authorities have begun to develop locally-based services of this kind, where experienced guidance workers can discuss the individual needs of potential students and feed this information into the planning of appropriate courses and activities.

At Sandown, a formal system of assessment of needs and interests was set up through a course called *Choices*. It ran for six consecutive

weeks and enabled adult students to sample a range of opportunities and to make informed choices about further study. The course itself was evaluated and formed the basis for the development of a further range of courses for the target age-group, at various levels of knowledge and skill. These new courses were then advertised. In this way, not only did they provide an opportunity for progression for the initial group of students, but also for many others with similar educational needs.

Another source of market information about the older unemployed is through ongoing work in related areas, most obviously in work for the unemployed generally. Outreach activities can produce useful feedback. In Bradford, for example, EASA (Education Advice Service for Adults), through success in targeting the unemployed as a whole, has been able to increase the number of enquirers among the over-40s. This group now comprises about 13 per cent of its clients.

Outreach and networking can complement each other, as was found by a project in Northumberland: 'The main objective was to try to make contact with men facing or having recently experienced redundancy. There existed no obvious lines of communication with the miners themselves but, through liaison with the Blyth Resources and Initiatives Centre, contact was made with two local miners who, in turn, helped with the recruitment of a party of six ex-miners.'

Once courses have been planned and decisions taken about which activities need to be individually promoted, information and publicity will be required. Effective information and publicity will not only assist in recruitment, but can provide feedback about the market, helping to sharpen further the targeting and content of future work. It is important that information is interesting, clearly presented, and uses plain language, without appearing patronising. Also, that the methods employed for publicity and promotion are the result of a careful analysis of what targets are being aimed for; how those targets will best be reached; and what key information the potential customers will need.

Most unemployed people actually lack information about educational opportunities. If they want to find out more, they are likely to turn to colleges, libraries, advice bureaux or to job centres, in the main. It is essential that colleges have a user-friendly mechanism for handling requests and that literature and other publicity materials are properly targeted, and deal with the issues which are critical to participation.

The Pioneer Work Project in Leeds, for example, reports: 'The most important barriers to access were lack of information about courses; problems with children; problems with fares; and, for women in particular, a reluctance or inability to travel more than two miles to a course. Lack of information about courses cannot simply be overcome by increased impersonal publicity, since 65 per cent of students stated that they knew about courses via word of mouth.'

The key word here is 'impersonal'; to maximise success, leaflets, advertisements and other publicity materials should, whenever possible, include information which will help to overcome barriers to recruitment. Prospective students are likely to want to know about the location of activities (possibly including how to get there), their timing, and who else is likely to be attending: will they be joining others like themselves or a wider group, including younger people and those who are not unemployed? They will also want some clues as to the extent of commitment involved, in terms of formality and duration, what the activities entail and what their objectives are. If they join in, where will it lead, what use is it? Are there any funds or grants available to help pay for travel and/or attendance, what is the cost, and will participation interfere with entitlement to benefits?

It is also important to tailor materials to specific groups within the older unemployed. It may need to be presented in languages other than English, for example, or to make particular reference to physical access for the handicapped, or to highlight the availability of child-care and crèche facilities (grandparents, too, look after children).

The more detailed and specific information is, the more carefully it will require targeting. Short runs of leaflets, for example, can be prepared for particular audiences, whereas press advertisements must necessarily publicise wider opportunities. However, editorial publicity in the local press may be more rather than less likely to be achieved if there is something unusual or distinctive about the activity planned or provided. Coverage of a course in progress allows editors the opportunity to arrange a photograph. This will help make the story more attention-grabbing, possibly attracting recruits for future courses. (And always try to get a contact name and phone number included in stories.)

Other possibilities for publicity include posters in local libraries and unemployment centres, items on local radio (don't forget phone-ins), exhibitions (maybe of work achieved by students), and entries in local directories, such as 'what's on' guides.

Overall, information and publicity will need to take into account the image which the organisation providing the course or activity is seeking to put forward. It will need to break down false impressions (if they are false) that, for example, a college caters only for young people on full-time courses. This is an institution-wide consideration, and one which could be addressed in the design and content of the college's or organisation's overall prospectus.

QUESTIONS ON MARKET ISSUES

- What strategies do you have to find out what older unemployed people might want from education?
- What networks have been, or might be, set up with other agencies? Are there channels of communication and consultation with local interest groups?
- Have you properly considered the commitment of adequate

- resources to networking and collaboration?
- Are older people and relevant outside organisations represented on your management and planning committees?
 - Have you any provision for the assessment of individuals' needs, through guidance or other services?
 - What has been done to ensure that learning in response to any needs that are identified is negotiated with individual students and, where appropriate, groups of students?
 - Is your college or organisation user-friendly for non-traditional clients?
 - How do prospective students currently find out about the courses and activities you offer?
 - Does your organisation have any workers specifically responsible for marketing and/or publicity? Do you have a 'strategy'?
 - How well is your publicity targeted? Does it address issues relevant in overcoming known barriers to participation?
 - How do you record and take action on information gained from publicity and ongoing activities?
 - What image does your organisation project, and how might it need to be changed?

PRODUCT ISSUES

A special group

To what extent should activities be specifically for the *older* unemployed, or should they cater for all ages of unemployed people? This is a crucial question and precedes all others on 'product development'.

The case for 'integration' is that learning opportunities will tend to be more diverse and 'richer' through a wider mix of participants and that it will avoid creating 'ghettos' of particular groups. On the other hand, there are dangers in this, comprehensive, approach of losing sight of the distinctive needs of the older unemployed. 'We decided to make older people a priority,' reports a worker with the Birmingham Job Change Project. 'Apart from anything else, they would not come to the project if there were lots of younger people here'.

Evidence backs up the view that older people generally prefer to be in a learning environment with people of their own age, and this indicates that 'infill' – the use of spare capacity on existing college courses – is probably not the most appropriate form of provision for this particular group when they first come into an educational environment.

Infill needs to be one of a range of strategies for providing learning opportunities, and is both useful and effective in that it can provide low-cost per capita places, and can offer integration into 'mainstream' activities.

However, specific and separate activities help to underline the importance of the older unemployed as a distinctive group to college staff and managers.

In Sandown's view: 'It is necessary that tutors begin to recognise the neglect of the older adult'. Initiatives also need the support of management, and the college's project team suggests that a useful start could be the creation of a committee to deal with issues relating to education and the older unemployed.

Potential conflict of interest and motivation between younger and older people is another important aspect of the case for distinct provision for the older unemployed, and is an issue which also has important significance for course content.

Younger people are perhaps more likely as a group to have a shared focus in terms of vocational relevance and employment outcomes. Older unemployed people are more likely as a group to have a variety of objectives in participating in a particular course, and as individuals may have widely differential chances within the job market.

In addition, depending on factors affecting the local economy and personal experience of trying to get back into employment, an individual's own objectives may vacillate from getting a job to accepting the inevitability of early retirement, and back again.

There are implicit dilemmas here, both in terms of curriculum content, and in terms of the tutor's approach. In many ways, the dilemmas reflect those of the education system as a whole: to what extent should education be regarded as the pursuit of knowledge and personal growth, and to what extent as the means of skilling labour for the nation's economy?

It can be argued that education is both: but there are no easy answers to the question of which should be the primary focus for the older unemployed. What is clear, however, is that a multi-faceted approach to curriculum (and sometimes to individual goals) is necessary. It is infinitely more difficult to provide this approach, or to provide a supportive environment following continual failure to obtain employment, in a purely 'infill' situation.

A measure of experience

There are many issues which unite older adults. One is their experience and the need for learning to take this into account. The acknowledgement and assessment of prior learning is important both for diagnostic and development purposes. In many cases, this learning can be formally accredited and contribute towards the acquisition of qualifications. It is also important in helping the older unemployed to reassess the value of their experience.

The acknowledgement and, where appropriate, formal accreditation of prior learning (APL) is relevant to curriculum development with older unemployed adults in three distinct ways.

Firstly, in the question of access to courses. Too many institutions, particularly in further education, have entry qualifications for vocational courses which relate only to previous *educational* experience and achievement. Older people are less likely than the young to have these qualifications, and the result, effectively, is discrimination.

This could be reduced or even eliminated if those responsible for recruitment used all prior learned experience as a basis for access.

Secondly, in course provision, particularly given the growth in course modularisation. Once courses are divided into modules and within each module particular skills are recognised, then it becomes easier to give credit to prior learning if the student can demonstrate that this range of skills has already been acquired. Accreditation of prior learned skills thus enables people to pass through a course without having to repeat and rehearse what they already know. This is particularly valuable for older people who will generally have gained skills in many walks of life, at work, in the home and in the community.

Thirdly, in the process of education. Many people, but especially older adults, bring an enormous amount of skill and expertise to educational provision. Course organisers should capitalise on this. Many tutors remark that the presence on courses of a number of older students transforms their role from 'teacher' to 'facilitator'.

For older unemployed adults to be able to give full weight to their prior learning, several steps need to be taken. Time should be taken to reflect on experiences, and from those experiences to identify actual learning in the form of competencies. Statements of these competencies should be accompanied by portfolios which provide valid, reliable evidence of the learning which has taken place. As the development of APL within an institution relies on the active participation of admissions tutors for other courses, these tutors must be able and prepared to assess competency statements as evidence of achievement which is eligible for exemption from, or for entry to, particular courses. Similarly, there must be the active co-operation of examining boards and employers so as to recognise statements of prior learning as valid measurements of competence.

Tutors will need to be aware of the developments taking place in APL (sometimes also referred to as APE – the accreditation of prior experience) at national level. The CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards) is currently taking a lead in national developments in relation to access procedures, and will be an important source of information. NCVQ (National Council for Vocational Qualifications) is also moving towards the incorporation of accredited experience into the new system of national vocational qualifications.

At local and regional level, support in establishing and implementing procedures for the assessment and accreditation of experience, and for opening up progression routes within and across institutions, may be available through membership of an Open College Network. A number of such organisations are now established in various parts of the country, and many more are in their early stages of development.

Skills and competencies

Leaving aside the vocational aspects of education and training, whether this be in building on old skills or in learning new ones,

what other skills and social competencies should form the core of provision for the older unemployed?

A lack of basic communication skills, in literacy and numeracy, presents an elementary hurdle to learning and to wider community participation. It also serves to reduce job prospects, particularly in a period of high unemployment.

Good presentation skills is another factor which can make all the difference between applying for a job and getting it. Employers tend to favour full and detailed curricula vitae (c.v.), stressing competencies rather than a list of jobs held. They value a positive attitude towards age and experience and like to see evidence of what they perceive as adaptability to change. They also like to see an interest in the specific job and company and for an interviewee to be 'well turned out'. Education can teach these things overtly whilst encouraging those positive attitudes and self-perceptions that contribute to improved employability covertly. Involvement in education in itself is likely to be taken as a 'good sign' by most employers.

Study skills, including effective time management, are crucial in returning to learning after a long break, particularly for those with previous unhappy memories of schooling. Skills in interacting with other people, in problem-solving, evaluation and self-assessment are all important. So, too, are information seeking skills, which can be important not only to self study but also to self determination, self reliance, and self confidence.

Supporting all these aspects of educational provision should be a continuing process of advice and guidance (study and vocational). This is essential in identifying and negotiating appropriate learning, as well as in providing personal support. It also plays an important part in enabling students to progress through their present involvement in learning, possibly on to qualifications, further studies, paid employment or voluntary community work. (The notion of 'progression' is important also in the design of education: that activities in greater or lesser measure fit into a wider pattern; that they lead somewhere.)

Methods of learning

In general, unemployed people will be best served by more flexible methods of learning than the traditional classroom style. These may include the use of informal learning groups, various forms of open learning, and the use of non-traditional locations.

Wherever groups of older unemployed people are brought together for learning, opportunities will be created to harness experience within the group, as well as the group dynamic itself. A skilled tutor will take advantage of this to develop a pro-active approach in relation to assessment, curriculum, and student support.

At the very heart of these processes will need to be an approach which centres on the individual student, and which uses negotiation to evolve an appropriate methodology; negotiation can be used successfully both at individual and at group levels, even within the same group.

A wide variety of material is now available for tutors to use in leading students through self-assessment processes, designed to evaluate personal skills, goals, and courses of action in relation to education, training, and employment. (Your Regional Curriculum Base or regional Open University office will be able to advise on suitable materials.)

While student self-assessment of this kind has been found to be useful for some time, a more recent development with older unemployed people has been the use of self-assessment on a group basis. (This was used very successfully by Sandown College via an educational guidance and assessment course, as described in Chapter 4.) Advantages of the group approach lie in the possibilities for peer support, and the sharing of knowledge and experience.

A pro-active approach to curriculum can draw upon the processes and outcomes of self-assessment, as well as the outcomes of guidance interviews, and of prior learning assessment, in making an overall evaluation of student needs. The final planning of course content and method will also need to take account of local economic and community factors. Making use of experience and expertise within the group can help create valuable mutual support mechanisms. It can also be exploited, in a more or less formal way, to develop systems of skill transfer, or skill sharing.

One model of skill sharing is that in which a network links volunteers offering to share a skill with other people who have a similar interest or experience, or simply wish to learn something new. The aim here is to help individuals realise that everyone has skills that are useful, whether formally learned or not, and that the sharing of these skills enables others to learn.

Other more highly focused models may, for example, encourage the sharing of craft skills in the hope of helping members to start their own businesses or co-operatives, based upon their craft or hobby.

Learning in a collective situation is not the most appealing or most effective method for everyone. Some prefer to be away from the critical gaze of their peers, or simply to work at their own pace. Self-learning programmes can be an appropriate solution, and can enable students not only to learn on their own, but to monitor their own progress through self-testing, though there can never be an appropriate substitute for the additional human support available when necessary from a real live tutor. In general, self-learning will probably appeal more to the person who has already undertaken some form of post-compulsory education successfully, or has a fair amount of self-confidence and motivation.

Where and when

Unemployed people will invariably have problems if courses are located in places far from home or inaccessible by public transport, and, even if the location is on a convenient bus route, the cost of fares might be prohibitive. The same is true for the timing of courses:

it needs to fit in with the rhythms and routines of daily life. Equally, the environment for learning needs to be appropriate.

Relatively fewer older and unemployed people own cars, while the cost of travel on buses can be prohibitive to those on reduced incomes. A survey in Sunderland concluded: 'People will not travel more than two miles to a course, it's just not worth the money. A majority of respondents considered it very important that courses should be near where they live.' In nearby Northumberland, a project found that a considerable amount of time was spent in co-ordinating student car-sharing.

Evidence from several projects shows that older adults prefer day-time activities. They also, once involved, do not want to have to break from these activities because colleges close down when full-time students are on vacation. A tutor in Suffolk commented: 'People don't want to stop coming just because it is the summer. We carry on and only break for two weeks.' Additionally, those who are unemployed do not want to have to wait until the start of traditional academic terms to get involved in education. They see it as a route back to work, and they want to return to employment as soon as possible. This places a premium on flexible provision on a 'roll on, roll off' basis, and short cycle courses which do not tie people into activities which may last longer than students hope to be out of work.

Environment is also crucial: many older people find educational institutions hostile and intimidating. Partly this may be a product of unhappy past memories, but it is also a fact that classroom settings can easily suggest a formal set of relationships which are inimical to the partnerships at the heart of negotiated learning. As a miner on a Northumberland project put it: 'Look, I'm only a pit lad. I left school 26 years ago. You won't catch me sitting at a desk.' In addition, catering and other arrangements often throw older people together with a large number of full-time school-leavers with whom they do not feel comfortable.

Sandown College reports: 'Certain environmental and administrative changes could be made to make older people feel more at ease in the college. For example, 150 older adults attend 'level one' dancing classes. They have to walk to the third floor during breaks for refreshment. Another example is the complicated registration forms, clearly designed for school-leavers. A simplified version of this form might be designed for the older adult. Finally, an alternative 'quiet' student common room without a juke box might be provided.'

One of the things which older people value most about educational activities is the access to facilities, such as machinery and recreational areas. The message simply is that this attraction can be easily dissipated if older adults are made to feel like intruders. One solution is to bring the advantages of college provision, including portable equipment, to students through the use of non-traditional accommodation, such as community centres and adult education annexes.

QUESTIONS ON PRODUCT ISSUES

- Have you considered targeting courses and activities towards older adults specifically? Do you agree with it? How do you cater for different groups within the 'older unemployed'?
- Do entry qualifications for your courses disadvantage older adults? What procedures exist to credit experience?
- Do teaching and learning styles and methods encourage and use experience-based learning?
- What transferable skills have been built into courses and activities for the older unemployed?
- Have you taken steps to facilitate 'progression' through educational activities and on to paid or voluntary work or further study?
- What provision have you made for open learning and for flexible and year-round timetabling?
- Have you considered the location of activities within your institution? Is it possible to relocate them to make physical access more convenient for older people?

SUPPORT ISSUES

Advice and guidance

Staff development

Organisational policy (including fees and concessions)

Evaluation

Guidance has a key role to play in helping educational providers to identify the needs of those they wish to cater for. It is a valuable source of market information and appropriate steps should be taken to gather and assess such data in developing courses.

Once the student is enrolled, guidance plays an essential part in the negotiation of the curriculum, in supporting students on a personal basis and in facilitating progression through studies and from them to other things, including paid employment, community work or further studies. Vocational guidance is obviously important in this context.

Guidance is one way of acknowledging the diversity of students by recognising each as an individual. Its importance is underlined by clear evidence from a number of projects of ways in which the need for it goes as far as marking a redefinition of tutors' roles. In Birmingham, the Job Change project reports: 'Lots of people come in here and are really down. We see confidence building as one of the primary roles of the centre. People need a lot of support, particularly when they don't get a job; they get very despondent.'

Recognising the need for continuing support for older adults, institutions need to plan ways of providing it, including guidance on leaving, an often neglected area. There are interesting and successful schemes emerging in several parts of the country,

where a person in an institution takes 'pastoral' responsibility for a particular group. This could be applied to older unemployed adults. Many colleges of course also have a student counsellor, whose role may encompass that of educational guidance; course tutors may similarly be called upon for advice.

The experience of tutors with a special remit to support adult students has been very positive. They will often have cross-college responsibilities and will be able to avoid the burden of departmental bureaucracies. They are identifiable and can become an effective advocate inside the organisational structure, for instance in arguing the case for resources. In one college, in Gloucestershire, the person who performs this role has successfully persuaded the college to give people aged 45 and over a priority for access provision.

Whilst many bodies are now beginning to identify an individual to take on this role, the day-to day-responsibilities for support for older students may constitute a stress on the class tutor. Some staff are unsure about how to cope with older students in their institutions; others resent their very presence. Many do not know what to expect, but most find that the actual experience of working with older adults is a positive one.

The importance of the tutor to the success or otherwise of work with older adults is underlined by the findings of a survey carried out in Sunderland. It reports: 'When asked to state two things which would most discourage participation (in activities), respondents were clearly primarily concerned with the atmosphere of the course and the attitude of the staff towards them.'

Part of the answer to the problems faced by teachers in carrying out the wider role required of them in working with older adults can be found in **staff training and development**. However, college managers, too, need to be aware of the demands which will be experienced by staff so that they can provide the necessary institutional support. Staff development will need to take consideration both of issues of content and of sources of support.

For example, in terms of the content of staff development programmes, it is likely that a wide range of topics will need to be covered, particularly for staff with little or no experience of teaching adults. Topics might include the following:

- awareness of demography, structural ageism and employment patterns
- needs evaluation
- course planning and monitoring
- marketing and publicity
- outreach and informal learning
- accreditation and prior learning
- guidance, counselling, and assessment
- course evaluation and the use of performance indicators.

There is a wide range of support available in the planning and

delivery of staff development in this field of work. Agencies engaged in it include NIACE/REPLAN and the Regional Advisory Councils; Local Education Authorities (now empowered to offer places on in-service training to the voluntary sector); Further Education Colleges, individually and in groups; Accredited Training Centres (funded by the Training Agency); and Open College Networks.

The NIACE/REPLAN programme, with the Regional Advisory Councils for further education, has had a responsibility for staff development in connection with educational activities for the adult unemployed since the programme started in 1984. An advisory group in each region works with the NIACE/REPLAN regional field officer in the development and delivery of the staff development programmes.

At Sandown College, in its project for the unemployed, staff development and support worked on three levels. Meetings of the team running the project were held regularly to evaluate teaching and the curriculum, to assess the effectiveness of the course, and to consider the particular perspectives of older adults. In addition, there was involvement in a staff development curriculum planning group organised by the Regional Advisory Council for the North-west, and, finally, a diploma in the education of older adults was developed with the University of Liverpool.

A number of issues need to be dealt with at the level of **organisational policy** if educational opportunities for adults, including the unemployed and older people, are to be radically improved. Staff development is one of the most important of them.

Many of these issues have institution-wide implications. A list of those already mentioned would include:

- Publicity and overall 'image'
- Marketing strategy as part of management planning
- Resourcing
- Collaboration with other organisations and their formal representation in planning and management
- Accessibility in terms of time and place, including timetabling and open learning
- The need for guidance and counselling for adults
- The assessment and accreditation of prior learning in relation to access and courses
- 'User friendly' facilities and administration
- Staff development.

In addition, there are a number of other issues which require institution-wide consideration. One is the need to see work with the older unemployed as part of a growing portfolio of institutional capabilities linked to non-traditional client groups. Another is the need to support and develop the work through extensive links outside the institution itself. The creation and promotion of such links is essential in providing appropriate responses to local

community and economic developments, and requires positive management commitment and support in order to be effective. Those colleges which form satisfactory external working alliances will be those best placed to offer the full range of educational opportunities to their students.

Particularly important will be the proposed network of Training and Enterprise Councils due to be set up over the next two to three years. Other important partners may include JobCentres, Chambers of Commerce, education guidance agencies, Councils for Voluntary Service, economic development bodies, and local authorities.

Management can have a critical influence on the adoption of an anti-ageist policy and a code of practice whereby it can be implemented. It can also play the key role in determining the overall organisational culture: what the college or other provider sees as its role, what it sets as appropriate norms in respect of behaviour and procedures. This again requires an institution-wide approach.

Another area in which management's role can be decisive is in links with other education providers, not least so as to establish access and progression routes. In the context of the older unemployed, for example, this approach could encourage access courses being developed which lead, not only as many already do, on to higher education but to lower level City and Guilds, BTEC and GCSE courses.

Finally, the institution as a whole has an important role in determining accessibility through its policy on **fees and concessions**.

All the available evidence points to price and cost as a major problem for older unemployed adults. The cost of attendance can be significantly lessened by the appropriate location and timing of courses and by the provision of back-up facilities such as creches and low-cost catering. Many local education authorities do have fee remission policy covering the unemployed but there is no clear pattern; concessionary schemes are often over complicated. In addition, many potential students are discouraged by fears of loss of benefits. Often, they are ignorant of grants and allowances that might be available.

In considering their policy, organisations should also consider frankly the question of whether they see 'concessions' as a form of welfare or charity, a form of 'patronising ageism', or as a means of 'positive action' to recruit new student groups. The answer will inform much else of organisational policy.

Evaluation is an essential underpinning to policy and practice. Within the context of strategic planning (both in relation to the Education Reform Act and to non-advanced further education), the processes of evaluation are of increasing importance. Evaluation provides both a yardstick for performance, and a means of feedback on outcomes which can be incorporated into planning.

The process of evaluation at its simplest must begin with the objectives which have determined the establishment of provision, and find appropriate methods for measuring whether these have

been achieved in terms of actual outcomes. Clearly, employment will be an appropriate criterion where the prime objective is to help students back into work; but where multiple objectives are involved, multiple means of measurement will be required.

Methods may need to be devised for measuring the long-term outcomes in relation to individual students, either where employment is not found immediately, or where a further course of study is the means of obtaining it. Account needs to be taken, too, of changes of emphasis in aims and objectives which may occur during a course, both in relation to individuals and to the course itself. These factors make the evaluation of education for older unemployed people even more complex.

The use of performance indicators is increasingly an essential tool in the processes of evaluation, feedback and planning for the further education sector, but still requires a great deal of development and refinement, particularly in relation to work with the unemployed, and with adults as a whole. Individual tutors and course planners can have an important role in developing indicators in relation to student performance, course outcomes, quality, and cost effectiveness.

In the words of Watts and Knasel: 'Evidence seems to suggest that the most successful educational opportunities are those where the most effort is given to matching provision directly to learner needs both at the initial design stage and at every subsequent stage of implementation (*Adult Unemployment and the Curriculum*).'

QUESTIONS ON SUPPORT ISSUES

- What procedures and mechanisms does your organisation have for coping with problems and difficulties experienced by unemployed students?
- Is there a particular member of staff with responsibility for support and guidance with unemployed students?
- How does your organisation and its managers cope with the new demands on teachers arising from work with older students?
- What training is available for teachers unused to an older student body, and is it part of a wider scheme involving other colleges, providers and the local authority?
- How much does your organisation see work with the unemployed as part of a wider capability to provide education for non-traditional groups?
- What links has your organisation developed with employers and their organisations?
- Is management addressing the appropriate policy issues?
- Is attitude to age a feature of your equal opportunities policy?
- How much attention is paid to access and progression routes into, through and beyond the institution?
- What is your organisation's (and local authority's) policy on fees and the costs of courses? Is it simple, easily understood and well publicised?
- What steps have been taken to evaluate both policy and practice?

RESPONSES IN TWO AREAS

There have been several responses to the issues we have raised here. The two case studies which follow provide an illustration of what can be and is being done in different parts of the country.

LIVERPOOL

City and Sandown Colleges

City College decided to design a pilot course with the intention of attracting unemployed people over the age of 45 to studies leading to GCE (General Certificate of Education) O- and A-level qualifications (O-level has now been replaced by the General Certificate of Secondary Education, GCSE). These 'access to GCE' courses would seek to increase skills, confidence and employability.

It was felt that the typical recruit would be someone aged 45 or older, who had probably left school at 15, was basically literate, but had had no formal education since. This was to be true of all 15 initial recruits, save that three had recently undertaken various adult education short courses. The course ran for two terms, in 1987.

The course was advertised through libraries, community groups, unemployment organisations, trade unions, bookshops, hospitals, job centres, health centres, theatres, the local press and radio, and colleges. Particularly effective sources of referral were branch libraries, trade union and college contacts.

An advisory service was available during the recruitment period. Some enquiries were more suitably directed to other courses. A follow-up letter was also sent to people who had initially expressed interest, but who did not enrol. The enquiries and responses produced some interesting findings. For example, older adults saw study and communication skills as important and they strongly preferred courses specifically for their age group.

Preparation within the college included guidance and counselling to all entrants prior to the course, so as to assess prior learning and educational needs; information briefing about the course to reception and telephone staff; special enrolment procedures for course entrants, handled separately by the tutor; and information briefings to all tutors in the faculty, whether involved in the course or not.

Curriculum requirements identified by the initial counselling and assessment procedures were mostly concerned with study skills and with written and spoken communication skills. These became important elements of the course, together with support tutorials and private study. Both individual and group tutorials were tried and the former was found to be by far the more effective.

A formal assessment of the course was later made both by students and tutors. Students said the course had enabled more effective verbal communication with tutors and with other students; that it had also enabled more effective self-expression in writing and

improved writing skills; had taught them how to select appropriate study material; and it had enabled them to make appropriate choices for future study.

Tutors felt that, in future, even greater emphasis should be placed on study skills, and that this element should be made subject-specific, by earlier and closer co-ordination between study skills and subject tutors, in order to make students even better prepared for the transition to examination courses.

The overall outcomes of the 'access to GCE' course (called *Think Again*) were that the course had helped to indicate how faculty provision for adults, from basic education through to 'A'-level, could become more integrated and co-ordinated, making student progression easier, and that the planning, delivery and assessment of the course had helped to inform the development of 'access to higher education' courses (which the college planned to introduce a year later).

Two-thirds of the initial students went on to further courses of study, or immediately into part-time employment, while the remainder, all aged over 60, felt that they had benefited from the experience of taking part in the course. Appropriate counselling and guidance at point of entry virtually eliminated drop-out.

At Sandown College courses have also been developed for the over-45s, including women returners and the long-term unemployed, as well as those who have retired early and those past normal retirement age.

Provision has been through a modular programme organised on three levels: basic, intermediate and 'access'. This is supported by an educational guidance and self-assessment course (*Choices*), which seeks to help individuals to pick appropriate levels and modules.

The initial *Choices* course attracted 25 people; more than half had no formal qualifications, and none had more than two O-levels. Nineteen progressed to other courses, including nine who undertook 'Access' courses into higher education. Evaluation of the *Choices* course showed that, overwhelmingly, students felt the experience had helped them to assess their own potential, had enhanced study skills, and had increased confidence.

The broad objectives at all levels of provision have been to help unemployed people to improve their work prospects and to help them to adjust to life without paid work. Within these objectives, the college attempted to achieve several aims. These included providing a network for recruitment, helping to improve transferable skills, building self confidence, developing new areas of interest and aptitude among students, helping students to make choices about further training and giving recognition to prior experience as a basis for learning.

Two wider issues determined the style and philosophy underpinning the programme at Sandown. The first was the establishment of some form of progression, to facilitate entry into work, either voluntary or paid, or into further or higher education. The second was that of developing different levels of opportunity.

The college's past experience suggested that a key feature in provision would be acknowledgement of prior experiential learning. Sandown suggest a model for this. It comprises four stages:

- systematic reflection on experience from significant previous learning
- identification of significant learning, expressed in precise statements of interests and objectives
- collection and synthesis of evidence to meet the identified and negotiated objectives
- the assessment of accreditation.

The final form of assessment might include the following integrated packages: profiles, portfolios, statements of competence, accreditation of experience and of competencies.

The college's three years of project work drew some interesting conclusions about education and the older unemployed. One was that diverse approaches to learning were necessary to develop student skills. These approaches included self-directed learning by individuals and groups, team teaching and project work based on prior learning and involving 'tasks'.

Student needs were important, and many students needed a great deal of support and counselling. Many lacked confidence. They often overstretched themselves and became despondent. Others found that family commitments and loyalties became strained. This created a need for one-to-one counselling, which, in turn, placed a greater burden on tutors.

Another conclusion from the project was the fact that the views of staff were crucial: many did not immediately link the college's equal opportunities policy to the needs of older people.

Finally, the physical environment was important in combating the 'invisibility factor' – the non-participation of older adults in education. The college had been created with the needs of the young in mind. This was reflected in the location of canteens and common rooms, and underlined the need for creative solutions if older adults were not to feel isolated.

NORTHUMBERLAND Horticulture and Self-Employment

The decision to close Bates Colliery, in Blyth, in the south-east Northumberland coalfield was announced in March 1986. When the axe finally fell in the summer of that year, male unemployment in the town rose to 26 per cent. The previous year, Northumberland LEA had appointed a development officer, Allan Cassidy, to develop and promote work with the adult unemployed as part of the REPLAN programme. In response to the news of the pit closure, he planned a new educational initiative.

Allan knew that two former miners from the Blyth area had lost a

substantial amount of redundancy money when a market garden enterprise went disastrously wrong: in spite of a high degree of gardening skill, they lost out because of their inexperience in running a business. There might be others, he thought, who would try their hands at turning a hobby into a livelihood. How could he best support them, and encourage success where their workmates had failed?

He decided to explore how educational facilities and opportunities for unemployed people could be further developed at the county's agricultural college, at Kirkley Hall, and to develop and target education for ex-miners.

Allan pursued the development project through the Blyth Resources and Initiatives Centre, which was managed through the then Manpower Services Commission's Community Programme and sponsored by the local trades council. He was able to use the centre as a means for communication and recruitment, and it was here that he discussed the concept of 'horticulture and self-employment' with ex-miners.

The plan was that gardening skills could be developed at the horticulture department of the college of agriculture, whilst opportunities in business enterprise training could be offered more locally at the Northumberland College of Arts and Technology.

A visit by college staff and redundant miners to Kirkley Hall was a considerable success and stimulated detailed planning. The agricultural college offered to provide a variety of short course modules, each of two or three days' duration, on specific topics. These would provide 'tasters', giving the option to proceed to longer courses of practical training.

The courses fell into two broad categories: non-vocational, such as planning for an active retirement, or vocational skill-based courses dealing in subjects such as welding, forgework, vegetable production and concreting, for those of an age still be to seeking employment.

The other partner, the college of arts and technology, provided workshops on enterprise awareness, and intensive training programmes to help develop business ideas and skills.

Funding was obtained from the Manpower Services Commission through SCOPE, the Wider Opportunities Training Programme, which allowed the students to be enrolled at the college of arts and technology and then to receive skills training at the college of agriculture.

Emphasis on the possibility of self-employment was an important and integral part of the courses, as many ex-miners had expressed interest in setting up their own businesses. The courses deliberately set out to emphasise that developing a hobby into a livelihood is not an easy option, and requires careful planning if it is to be a success.

Fears about 'going back to college' were overcome when the students were told that the courses on offer would be designed so that they would be mainly practical in content. The enthusiasm of

the students was such that they also soon overcame doubts that an agricultural college might be the exclusive preserve of farmers.

Since they were first launched, and in addition to the original group of miners, the courses have catered for more than 150 unemployed people, including those made redundant from the Tyneside shipyards, British Telecom, and a diverse range of smaller companies.

Marketing the courses has been carried out with the co-operation of community venues such as libraries, centres for the unemployed, allotment societies and working mens' clubs, who have all helped with publicity and promotion. A leaflet drop was backed by local newspaper coverage. A subsequent evaluation of the marketing exercise has revealed that 55 per cent of students learned of the courses from the local press, 20 per cent from colleges and other referral agencies and five per cent from friends. This shows that, powerful though 'word of mouth' recommendation is, the best results can still come from well-targeted publicity.

The courses have been closely monitored through planning group meetings, which have helped to identify new subject areas and to introduce improvements. Allan Cassidy says:

'It is encouraging that most students rated the courses highly or extremely highly and suggested they should be longer. Many students requested some form of certificate on completing the course and those not linked to City and Guilds or Open Learning received a Northumberland College of Agriculture certificate of attendance. At this stage it is difficult to predict how many students who have taken part in the courses will become self-employed. At present two are known to have set up a business using the Enterprise Allowance Scheme and 18 have entered on the Business Enterprise Programme. It is early days and we are still breaking new ground in encouraging adults to participate in further education. I think we shall be on the right track so long as we can get people to share resources and experiences in the way that the colleges, and just as importantly, the miners have done.'

Most recently, with the closure of further collieries, including that at Ashington, the number of courses on offer has increased, with help from British Coal Enterprises. In early 1989, a new format, with 26 ex-Coal Board employees enrolled on an 180-hour course, was introduced. This includes 15 weeks' study with two consecutive days attendance in each week. Strongly slanted towards the practical, the course includes business guidance and areas such as general horticulture, landscaping, machinery and estate maintenance. It is hoped to offer this course nationally in five-week, fully residential blocks, with the support of British Coal.

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WHAT IS 'REPLAN'?

Established in 1984, REPLAN is a central government programme funded by the Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office with assistance from the Training Agency (formerly the Manpower Services Commission).

The programme has a remit to improve, increase and extend the educational opportunities available to unemployed adults, and to this end it works in partnership with a wide range of agencies, including local authorities, further education and voluntary bodies. It is not primarily concerned with funding additional provision but with encouraging providers to review, adapt and change in order to meet changed community demands.

The REPLAN programme operates through:

A central management and planning unit.

Eight regionally based development and consultancy teams offering a service to local authorities, statutory and voluntary providers of education and a wide variety of other agencies and organisations concerned with unemployment, employment and training. These staff seek to identify and promote good practice and to assist in the development of strategies for change.

A national programme of staff development for staff from the wide range of agencies whose resources can be harnessed to best meet the learning needs of unemployed adults.

A programme of local development and curriculum development projects.

A programme of publications designed to draw on REPLAN experience and to support and promote good practice in education for unemployed adults.

A milestone in the development of the REPLAN programme was the publication in 1985 of *Adult Unemployment and the Curriculum: a manual for practitioners* (A.G. Watts & E.G. Knasel, FEU), which provided a conceptual framework for those engaged in developing education for unemployed adults. This did not dwell solely on vocational aspects of education but examined roundly what education in its broadest sense had to offer.

Within this framework, education was seen as having the potential to assist unemployed adults in five main ways:

Employability – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will increase their chances of finding and keeping a job.

Coping – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills

and attitudes which will help them to cope with being unemployed.

Context – to help unemployed people understand the industrial and economic context which gives rise to unemployment and to explore the ways in which individuals, communities and public policy can work to reduce it.

Leisure – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will help them to make good use of their increased 'leisure' time.

Opportunity creation – to help unemployed people to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to create their own livelihood.

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The over-45s without employment are a large and identifiable group within the potential workforce who are – despite their maturity and the experience of a working life behind them – a frozen asset to the nation in both economic and social terms.

It has been part of REPLAN's strategy over a period of years to raise awareness in the education field of the need to respond to this client group, by means of redundancy counselling, curriculum development, support services, appropriate learning systems, access policy and personal guidance. This report explores the changing relationship between the older worker and labour market within the context of changing attitudes, employment patterns, joblessness and demographic change, and is the result both of research and practice.